

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

More Efforts to Direct Sole Source Tanker Contract

There were even more attempts by some members of Congress last week to direct a sole source contract for the Air Force tanker to Boeing.

Last week Congressman Todd Tiahrt (R-KS) introduced legislation, the KC-X Recompete Act, which would require the Air Force to re-bid the \$40 billion tanker contract that was awarded to Northrop Grumman in February.

The message of this tactic is clear: if the warfighter wants a new tanker to replace its 50-year-old fleet anytime soon, it has one choice, Boeing's KC-767.

This Act tells the warfighter—take the 767 – take it or leave it – or face years of delay to conduct a new competition.

Keep in mind, Boeing's 767 is a plane the Air Force determined was second best to the more capable, more modern, more fuel efficient Northrop aircraft – an aircraft, I am proud to say, which will be built in Alabama.

Yes, the GAO noted procedural errors in the source selection process but said its ruling did not reflect on the merits of the two aircraft.

There is no equivocation about which plane the Air Force wants – and desperately needs – Northrop Grumman's KC-45.

Some in Congress have repeatedly tried to take this decision away from the warfighter.

The Pentagon is now on a 60-day clock to decide what to do about the GAO ruling.

Congress cannot preempt the voice of our men and women who will take this plane into harm's way. We owe them that much.

America's Independence Day

Americans across the country and throughout the world will celebrate the 232nd anniversary of the founding of the United States of America this week.

The United States is the oldest continuous democratic nation in the world, a distinction well worth a celebration.

Whether you spend this Fourth of July having a picnic, watching a fireworks display, or enjoying the long weekend with family and friends, I encourage you to take a moment and reflect on why this day, Independence Day, is so important to our country.

As President Ronald Reagan wrote in 1981, "Let the Fourth of July always be a reminder that here in this land, for the first time, it was decided that man is born with certain God-given rights; that government is only a convenience created and managed by the people, with no powers of its own except those voluntarily granted to it by the people.

On this day, it is also appropriate to take a moment to observe our flag and remember the importance of each star and stripe.

Whether it is flying above an elementary school in Mobile or is worn by an American soldier in Iraq; the American flag carries the same message throughout the world.

For over 230 years, the American flag has represented our freedom, served as inspiration for her citizens, and has been a symbol of our nation's strength and unity.

On June 14, 1777, the Second Congress adopted a resolution requiring the flag of the United States to have 13 alternating stripes of red and white and 13 white stars in a blue field.

With a new stripe for each additional state, Congress realized the flag of the growing nation might soon look crowded. Congress, therefore, determined there would only be 13 alternating red and white stripes, representing the original colonies. A new star would be added for each new state joining the Union.

Not only are the stars and stripes significant, but the colors of our flag are noteworthy as well.

The red stripes of the flag represent the valor and bravery of the American people, the white stars and stripes symbolize purity and innocence, and the blue signifies justice, perseverance and vigilance.

President Woodrow Wilson delivered a poignant perspective on the American flag in his 1917 Flag Day message:

“This flag, which we honor and under which we serve, is the emblem of our unity, our power, our thought and our purpose as a nation.” And yet, though silent, it speaks to us – speaks to us of the past, of the men and women who went before us, and of the records they wrote upon it.”

“We celebrate the day of its birth; and from its birth until now it has witnessed a great history, has floated on high the symbol of great events.”

As we celebrate this Independence Day, remember the courageous individuals fighting for our freedom. Let us never forget the true meaning of the Fourth of July and the individuals who sacrificed their lives for this great country.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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For release the week of Monday, June 30, 2008. For more information please contact Mike Lewis at (202)225-4931.